



NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

March 15, 2011

The Honorable Mike Doogan
House of Representatives
Alaska State Capitol
Room 112
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: HB 15 – Student Athlete Traumatic Brain Injuries

Dear Representative Doogan:

The National Football League is pleased to support HB 15 – the Student Athlete Traumatic Brain Injuries bill. The bill will help raise awareness and protect youth athletes from the dangers of preventable brain injuries.

The NFL is playing a leading role on this important issue for the safety of our own players as well as athletes at all levels of sports. Our primary rule is this: the medical decisions of health care professionals take precedence over the playing decisions of coaches and players. Given our experience at the professional level, we believe a similar approach is appropriate and necessary when dealing with concussions in youth sports.

Concussions can occur in male and female athletes of any age and in any sport or recreational activity. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that there may be as many as 3.8 million sports and recreational-related concussions each year in the United States.

In addition, medical researchers have determined that children and teenagers whose brains still are developing are more susceptible to concussions than adults, and they recover more slowly. Recognizing and responding to concussions when they first occur aids recovery and helps to prevent prolonged concussion symptoms, chronic impairment and even death.

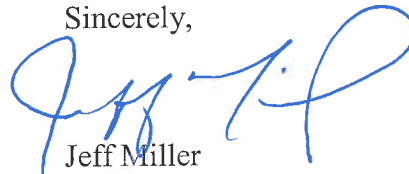
That is the reason the NFL supports the passage of this bill and similar legislation in states throughout the country. HB 15 contains three core principles: (1) concussion education for youth athletes, parents and coaches on an annual basis; (2) immediate removal of a youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion from play or practice; and (3) mandatory clearance of that youth athlete by an appropriate licensed health care professional before returning to play or practice.

The bill as drafted applies these principles to school-based youth sports. While this is vital, we encourage you to consider amending the legislation to include other youth sports leagues as well. All young athletes deserve the protections offered in this bill.

The youth concussion bill provides better protection for Alaska's youth athletes by mandating a more formal, aggressive and uniform approach to the treatment of concussions. We applaud you and offer our assistance in aiding the passage of this bill.

Parents, coaches, teachers and school personnel will benefit from this measure. And, most importantly, our youth athletes will as well.

Sincerely,



Jeff Miller
Senior Vice President